

The Draft Cherrybrook Precinct Rezoning Proposal

Dear Sir,

The Beecroft Cheltenham Civic (Trust) wishes to **object** to various aspects of the Cherrybrook Precinct Rezoning Proposal.

The Trust recognises that any increased residential development around the Metro station is sound planning practice and increased development over time is expected to occur. However the State Government should take into account what has been approved and developed at other metro station precincts and avoid some of the design errors of the past.

And, by learning from the past, create a precinct that will have greater functionality, greater environmental values and, in the longer term, create a sustainable housing precinct that is a desirable place to live.

The Trust has a number of serious concerns with the rezoning proposal.

Site constraints must be fully considered in the rezoning.

Cherrybrook is similar to other metro station precincts, with a major transport node being retrofitted into an existing suburban area. Surrounding infrastructure has to significantly changed, at great expense, to allow the residential development near the transport node to efficiently function. Therefore increased density residential development is inevitable. Unless the redevelopment is subsidised by the government.

The topography and geology are natural constraints. While high tension power lines and road networks are man-made constraints. How these constraints are managed in the rezoning will influence the long term success of the precinct. There appears to be selected strategic thought on these constraints.

The defined precinct appears to ignore the topography of the area, with an equal area to the flat north of the metro station and the same area on the steep southern side. In terms of pedestrian and cycling access serious consideration should be given to factor in slope and possibly making the northern area larger than the southern area.

Also there is a may be a problem for development due to land slippage issues on the southern side.

If the high tension transmission lines are expected to remain, traversing the precinct, then serious thought should be given to health and amenity issues where high and medium density development is located adjacent to the power lines. The vacant land between the Metro and Franklin Rd comes to mind.

Height of buildings close to the station

High rise residential towers above 6 storeys tend to be less desirable for residents. Often the taller the residential tower the greater the long term social issues. While the State Government is attempting to maximise density perhaps a flatter transition in height limits may achieve better amenity and social outcomes in the long term. In other words an increase in the number of 5-6 storey unit complexes and less high rise.

Separation between building and setbacks

Don't repeat errors of the past. Larger setbacks on all streets will always make housing more desirable. The setbacks to all road and pedestrian corridors proposed in the rezoning proposal must be increased. There are so many examples around Sydney where setbacks are totally inadequate, leading to very poor amenity and subsequently health issues.

The documents emphasise streetscapes of Blue Gums, being the indigenous trees in the area. But Blue gums need space to grow and as they mature, like blackbutts, they drop branches. Blue gums and blackbutts are acceptable in park land but along roads and pedestrian links trees such as Turpentine would be more acceptable.

Again, the health of residents living in a high rise next to high transmission power lines must be investigated. Additional setbacks for any tall residential buildings next to power lines should be mandatory.

Bushland and open space

There appears to be an emphasis on protecting the Blue Gum forest community. While commendable, the scattered locations and small areas of the park lands do not encourage long term viability of biodiversity (both fauna and flora) within the selected bushland. There is no significant connectivity between the selected bushland sites. The links appear to be token attempts to fit around the main driving agenda, being optimising housing. As stated above this rezoning is all about planning for liveable future and not short term single generational needs.

The identified Blue Gum forest north of the metro is too small and disconnected to achieve its desired purpose in the longer term. If adopted as per the plan, expect the proposed bushland site to struggle and decline in health, eventually become grassed open space with scattered trees. The same is likely to happen to the other designated 'pocket' parks.

Simply, if the State Government is serious about protecting and improving biodiversity the open space areas must have a minimum area plus healthy internal corridor links. But also be connected with the surrounding bushland, like the Cumberland State Forest, as well. This includes links across major roads.

Traffic and pedestrians

The Trust acknowledges the LOS findings and the recommendations to reserve land for future widening needs. But there is concern that the traffic modelling essentially concludes that, with the high rise development, the increased population compared to the earlier population projections will not result in increased congestion or pedestrian movement. In other words residents living in high tower blocks do not drive as much as lower density land owners. This is questionable, specifically in the longer term, which is the main aim of this rezoning.

To support this argument local residents, over the past 5 years, have experienced a noticeable increase in traffic on Castle Hill Road. Once the Cherrybrook precinct gets developed traffic is expected to increase significantly regardless of the modelling. Modelling is not always correct. The metro multilevel carpark is full now even before morning peak hour. Residents from surrounding suburbs are now regularly using the Cherrybrook metro because of congestion and lack of parking at Epping. So there is a need to take a more regional perspective.

As mentioned earlier, even though the topography on the south side may be a deterrent to pedestrian movement coming up the hill to the metro, grade separation for pedestrians crossing Castle Hill Rd should be given serious thought and not dismissed as unnecessary based on cost. Otherwise pedestrians will need to use the traffic lights to cross Castle Hill Rd and this is likely to result in longer cycles and hence further delays to traffic. Castle Hill Road becomes very congested in peak hours now.

The proposed cycleway along Glenhope Rd should be extended along Castle Hill Rd with an underpass to encourage more cyclists and pedestrians. There should be a cycleway on both sides of Castle Hill Rd to encourage cycle use in the flatter area north of the Metro. So cycling should be encouraged and not considered before the need and not after the fact.

Education

The masterplan excludes various schools and infrastructure from the rezoning. The reason is not clear. For example, Tangara school which is a large site, will default to Hornsby Council's R2 Residential zoning. Perhaps there is a reason for this but this exclusion may be detrimental to the school's future growth or even relocation. The need for additional public schooling also needs to be taken into account.

Utilities.

The documents provided tend to create more questions than answers. The electrical network requirements are not clear. The rapid expansion of renewable power like solar and batteries should be fully assessed in the document. In fact the document provided provides minimal recommendations on future needs.

Also, as mentioned above, the conflict between the 11KV transmission lines and high rise housing appears to be ignored. Yet this conflict of land uses must be fully addressed.

The metro tunnel is likely to have a protective easement close to ground level. While above ground development may not be sterilised, any development requiring excavation, whether residential or commercial, will need to take this constraint into account.

Sydney Water requirements tend to be unclear in the documents. The community will not want a repeat of the utility issues experienced elsewhere in recent housing estates in the North West of Sydney where the waste and potable water supplies fell short of demand and consequently delayed development.

In summary the Trust strongly believes that the State Government can achieve a better outcome than what is currently proposed. There must be vision that sets higher benchmarks which a desired focus centred more on its long term needs. A rezoning that will be sustainable over the next 4-5 generations, and not just 1-2 generations.

Yours faithfully

Ross Walker OAM

President

Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust

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